

ARTPRESSE: challenges and avenues of « unlocking » a corpus of mass media magazines from the interbellum

As part of the ARTPRESSE project, we are working on a set of Belgian illustrated weeklies published both in Dutch and in French during the 1920s and the 1930s. These magazines represent a typical kind of « printed mass media heritage » collected and held at KBR. Including a lot of ads and photos, various character fonts and complex layouts, they articulate both visual and textual elements leading to troublesome recognitions and loss of information coming along with digitisation. We would like to share some samples of our corpus and address some of the encountered challenges given the intermedial approach required by the specific magazine format and contents.

Our aim is to study the representation of Belgian art in the collections of mass media magazines by analysing both texts and images with a focus on art related contents, for example: illustrated (or not) articles devoted to artists and exhibitions, or artworks reproduced on full or double pages. In this perspective, special attention is given to relationships between artists, journalists and publishers. Full-text research (ensured by ABBYY Finereader) highlights titles, legends and contributors names, but some elements remain unrecognised, mostly because of the used character fonts or text alignment (a). Moreover, since magazines are visual media and our interest lies heavily in images, we are currently looking for methods to process this huge amount of visual information and how to link it with textual data (b). Lastly, we would like to discuss how computer vision could enhance the analysis of visual magazine content (c).



Two full-page reproductions of works of **Maurice Langaskens** (1884-1946) in which no text was recognized: *Le mirage* in *Bonjour* 8:44 (21/04/1940), p. 5 (on the left) and *Les reconstruteurs* in *A-Z* (1:06 (01/05/1932), p. 5 (on the right). The font style of the caption in the former was widely used for numerous other full-page artwork reproductions in *Bonjour*.



Ons Land 16:32 (10/06/1933), p. 25 : article by Jos Philippen on Flanders as the inspiration for the art of **Jan Frans Cantré** (1886-1931), saying in the caption that the portrait is "Boerenkop". *Soirées* 3 (23/10/1931), p. 17: article by Guido Eeckels on modern Flemish literature and especially Gerard Walschap. The name of the artist in the caption under the portrait is wrongly recognized (Contré instead of Cantré). Cover of the first edition of Gerard Walschap, *Volk* (1930) which was originally illustrated with Cantré's *Grafmaker* (original title of the work).



ABC 2:25 (17/07/1932) - Neither in the title nor in the caption under his portrait "**Robberecht**" (d. 1933) is recognized. Luckily Robberecht is once recognized in the text below so this double page article with numerous reproductions is findable.

ARTPRESSE aims at studying and digitising more than 150.000 printed pages in four years. Spanning research and digitisation, this interdisciplinary project is funded by the BRAIN-be framework program of BELSPO, coordinated by KBR via its DIGIT Department and conducted in collaboration with KULeuven and ULiège.